



# Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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## Trails for health

Trail users of all ages out exercising on Texas' Bee Creek Trail (Photo: Afsaneh Yazdani, College Station Parks and Recreation Department)



Rail-trails create healthy **recreation** and **transportation** opportunities by providing people of all ages with attractive, safe, accessible, and low - or no - cost places to bike, walk, hike, jog, or skate. In doing so, they make it easier for people to engage in physical activity. Trails can help people incorporate exercise into their daily routines by connecting people with places they want or need to go. In addition, they provide natural, scenic areas that cause people to actually want to be outside and physically active.

Most Americans make the connection between exercise and health, but many people still live sedentary lives. There is little argument that exercise reduces the incidence of a myriad of illnesses, including heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, high blood pressure, and obesity. Exercise has also been shown to raise self-esteem and increase our bodies' energy levels.

Individuals must choose to exercise, but communities can make that choice easier. Lack of time or access to convenient outlets for healthy transportation and recreation opportunities are reasons commonly cited by all populations as barriers to regular exercise. Communities can use trails and greenways as the tools to help make exercise more convenient and neighborhoods more exercise-friendly. By doing so, they can help change bad habits into healthy ones.

**Reversing the trend** - Learn about the many ways trails and other bicycle/pedestrian facilities can be used to encourage exercise, and the impact these improvements can have on community health.